

PTERIDOPHYTA OF THE LESSER ANTILLES.¹

George Proctor of the Institute of Jamaica has been studying the pteridophytes of the Lesser (and Greater) Antilles for many years. His contribution to the *Flora of the Lesser Antilles* reflects his long and close familiarity with the group he treats, especially during his extensive field explorations. The book is excellent and will be welcomed by all interested in the ferns and fern allies, tropical American flora and in plant geography. While there are technical details that pteridologists can disagree with, these do not relate to the overall usefulness of the treatment.

Keys to the families, genera and species are provided, as are an illustration for each genus (one or more species), and full descriptions and synonymy. The general range of each species, and the detailed distribution and ecology in the Lesser Antilles are also included. The taxa recognized include 11 families, 68 genera and 300 species and major geographic varieties. The largest genera are *Thelypteris* (35 species), *Trichomanes*, *Grammitis* and *Polypodium* (22 species each) and *Elaphoglossum* (21 species). The islands with the richest floras are Guadeloupe with 272 species, Martinique with 218 species and Dominica with 194 species.

A brief account of the botanical exploration of the Lesser Antilles indicates the major role that both George Proctor and Richard Howard have played in the field work that forms the basis of our present knowledge of the flora. The author has collected ferns on 15, and Howard on 11, of the 21 islands that have a pteridophyte flora. The third most widely traveled collector in the region was Jacquin who visited the islands in 1759.

The Lesser Antilles do not support a rich pteridophyte flora (Jamaica has almost twice as many species) and the species endemism of 14% is not high. However, they do represent a critical region for tropical American plant geography. They form an arc between the older and floristically richer areas of northern South America and the Greater Antilles. Accordingly the role of the Lesser Antilles as a route of migration is of unusual interest.

¹Howard, R. A. *Flora of the Lesser Antilles*, vol. 2. Pteridophyta by George R. Proctor, pp. 1-414. 1977. Arnold Arboretum, Harvard University, Jamaica Plain, Mass. 02130. (Price \$25.00).

The "Pteridophyta of the Lesser Antilles" not only provides for basic needs of classification and identification, but also (for the first time) a basis for biogeographic studies of the whole archipelago.

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